

NEWSLETTER

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The Wagon Shelter

In Newsletter 57, it was reported that Nick van der Sande had offered to pass on for display outside the Centre a traditional horse-drawn wagon, of which he is the custodian. At that time it was housed under a shelter at Pirongia Clydesdales, and the first step in that process, the relocation of the shelter, has now been completed.

The shelter was moved to the Heritage Centre site with the assistance of Bill Reymer and after lengthy consideration by the Executive Committee of precisely where it should be located, Brent Mealing and Robert McWha developed a plan to move it into position to the side of the former St Saviour's Church.

In a precisely engineered, but tricky manoeuvre, the shelter was lifted on Brent's small vintage tractor which was then pushed backwards into its planned location for the shelter by Bill Reymer's much larger modern tractor and then lowered into place. Since then, further work has been done to level the shelter and secure it. A coat of paint by Robert and Brent ensured that it now blends in with the main Heritage Centre building.

When issues to do with the ownership, insurance and security of the wagon have been resolved, it will be brought (hopefully horse-drawn) to the Centre where it will be re-housed in its shelter for public viewing.



The wagon shelter in place.

Stop Press



Members will be pleased to learn that following protests led by the Heritage Centre and the Pirongia Community Association at a community meeting in August, the Waipa District Council had a more thorough seismic assessment made of the War Memorial Hall which was closed last year because of earthquake risk. The results of the recent assessment raised its National Building Standards rating from 15 to 50 per cent, meaning that from the end of November, the hall will again be available for public use.

Something worth reading

There is a copy of Witi Ihimaera's recent novella, *Sleeps Standing: Moetū*, in our library, and if you are interested in the battle of Ōrākau, which marked the end of the Waikato war, it is well worth reading. It tells the story of Ōrākau from a Māori perspective, not that of the main protagonists, Ngāti Maniapoto, but one of the supporting tribes, the Rongowhakaata people of Tūranga, Gisborne, who sent men to fight in support of Maniapoto. The story is told from a contemporary perspective, using both the oral and written accounts of survivors of the battle as well as present-day historical interpretations.

In the novella (a short novel) a young Māori man, born in Australia, returns to New Zealand to seek permission to name a soon-to-be-born child Moetū which means 'Sleeps Standing', after his ancestor, and wants to know how he came by that name. Thus the story is that of Ōrākau, as experienced by the adolescent Moetū from Gisborne and Kararaina, an equally young woman from Waikato, both survivors who looked after children during the escape following the battle and eventually married. Its focus is on people and relationships during the three days when the 300 defenders in the pā, who included women and children, were surrounded by 1700 better armed and supplied adversaries.

The story is told in both Māori and English; on left and right facing pages, so the English version is really only about 60 pages long. The story is preceded by an interesting introduction by Hēmi Kelly putting the story into context, and is followed by a useful set of relevant illustrations together with an invaluable set of Māori eyewitness accounts of events at Ōrākau.

If you wish to buy a copy as a present (perhaps to yourself), the Te Awamutu Museum has copies for sale at \$35.

Thanks for Support

- **BRENT MEALING, & ROBERT MCWHA**, aided by **BILL REYMER**, who moved the wagon shelter into position and redecorated it to blend into its surroundings.
- **THE DIMINISHING BAND OF VOLUNTEERS** who, for another year, have continued to open the Centre on six days a week.

Alan Papesch

We were saddened in October to learn of the death of Alan Papesch who has been a member since 2012. Alan, grew up in Pirongia, and went on to lecture on engineering at the University of Canterbury. When he retired to live in Tauranga, he renewed his association with the village, visiting the Centre on many occasions, telling stories about growing up here and enthusiastically identifying himself in some old photographs. We share the sorrow of Janette and his family. He will be greatly missed.

Thanks Lyn

Following the Executive Committee meeting on 12 November, an afternoon tea was held to thank Lyn Jackson who is stepping down at the end of the month after opening the centre on most Sundays for 7 years. Lyn enjoyed talking with visitors and says that although she knew little about the local history initially, she felt well-supported and learned heaps. President Marilyn Yeates commented on her conscientious service to the Centre when she presented her with a floral tribute.



For Early 2020

For 13 years until 2018, the Centre began each new year with a barbecue held at the Pirongia Clydesdales cafe which is no longer available. In each year, the event was advertised in the Centre's November Newsletter. This year, the Executive Committee hopes to arrange an event in January or early February 2020, but the decision about where and when will not be made until its December meeting.

Members on email will be sent an emailed invitation and copies will be posted to others.

About Pukehoua

Until recently, it was assumed that Pukehoua, on the flank of Mount Pirongia, was a side vent of the mountain which had several other vents. However, when volcanologist Oliver McLeod spoke at our last AGM, George McQuillan, who studied earth science at the University of Waikato, was present to hear him, and gave the Centre a copy of a research report by him entitled *Revisiting Pukehoua*, on the origin and geological relationships of this flank peak. In it, he provides evidence, based on the analysis of its rocks, which indicates that although it is closely adjacent to Pirongia, Pukehoua is a separate small volcano, like others in the Alexandra Lineament, such as Puketotara and Kakepuku.

George grew up in Te Awamutu, but attended Pirongia School in Forms 1 and 2.

Ask at the desk if you would like to look at his report.

The Turner Reunion Book

Recently, the Centre had a copy printed for our library of a book about the family and descendants of William, Rangiahua and Ripekatangi Turner, by Arohanui Te Muri Turner, for a Turner family re-union held at Purekireki Marae in April 1983. The book was loaned to the Centre by John Graham, a descendant of the late Norma Graham, who regularly visits Pirongia with other relatives to maintain their family urupa at Kaipiha, located near where the Turners and then the Reynolds family lived. The book incorporates input from a wide range of family members to present a comprehensive and well-organized record, generation by generation. It is illustrated with many photographs. The book is available for borrowing by members.

Something New

An arrangement has been made with DOC to lend the Centre, from its collection, stuffed native birds for display. Every few weeks, the display of two birds in glass cases is changed.

Disclaimer:

Views expressed in items published in this issue do not necessarily represent the views of the Heritage and Information Centre.

Some interesting trivia

A courier package recently delivered to Beechey Street, Pirongia should have been delivered to Beechey Street, Opuia in the Bay of Islands. Further online inquiry, via Google, revealed that not only does Opuia have a Beechey Street, but it also has streets named Franklin, Penney, Kane, Collinson, Osborne, Baffin, Scoresby and Ross – all names of Northwest Passage explorers also commemorated at Pirongia. In addition, two other explorers, Sir John Richardson and Vice Admiral Kellet are also remembered in street names at Opuia.

Welcome new members

- Robert Hynson
- Felicity Campbell
- Dick Wilson
- Richard Voss

Major Frederick Jesse Hills

It is generally known that when the 2nd Waikato Regiment established Alexandra in June 1864, they were commanded by Colonel Theodore Haultain who was also the Commanding Officer of the overall Waikato Militia. What is less widely appreciated is that in October 1864, Haultain was returned to the House of Representatives as the member for Franklin and early in 1865 stood down from his military duties, to be replaced as CO of the 2nd Waikato Militia by Major Frederick Jesse Hills, about whom little has been recorded.

Frederick Hills came to New Zealand from Liverpool via Melbourne in March 1861 on the *Morning Light*, with his second wife, Frances, and three children. Initially he worked in Auckland as a ranger who impounded stray stock. However, in July 1863, when the NZ Militia was being formed to support General Cameron's British Army which was about to invade the Waikato, he volunteered for service at age 41 and was given the rank of Captain.

Like many of those given military commissions at that time, Hills came from a military background in Britain. His father had been a master mariner in the Royal Navy and Frederick had been commissioned in the 3rd West India Regiment, serving in British Guiana. His wife Frances, whom he later married in Scotland, was the widow of another West India Regiment Officer. One of her children, William Bredin, Frederick's step-son, also enlisted in the 2nd Waikato Regiment in September 1863 and eventually rose to the rank of Corporal.



Major Frederick Hills

Captain Frederick Hills commanded a company which established and manned the Esk Redoubt between the Queen's Redoubt at Pokeno and Miranda on the Thames Coast and served in the Commissariat Transport Corps supplying the British regiments. In September 1863, he was promoted to the rank of Major. Thus, when Col. Haultain went into parliament, Hills was his natural successor in command of the 2nd Waikato Regiment.

When land grants were allocated in late 1864 and early 1865, Major Hills was allocated a premium town acre in Kihikihi (on the corner of Lyons and Galloway Streets) and a farm allotment of 400 acres on the western side of Ohaupo Road from the Mangapiko Stream almost to Ngaroto Road, including much of what later became the Greenhill Estate. His step-son, Cpl George Bredin was granted a town acre, lower down on Galloway Street, and 60 acres on today's St Leger Road.

While in Auckland, in 1863 Frances Hills had another son named Thomas, but by 1865 the family had joined Frederick at Alexandra, although we do not know where they lived. However, a daughter (Catherine Louisa Henrietta) was born here in November 1865. Later they appear to have lived in Kihikihi or Te Awamutu.

Major Hills assumed command of the 2nd Waikato Regiment at a difficult time when, following decisions by the government, and contrary to expectation, militiamen were struck off military pay as they received their land grants, although they were still required to complete three year's service before becoming freehold owners. This meant that Hills was also struck off pay, although as the local commander, he was still required to implement the government policies affecting his militiamen. It must have been particularly galling for him to find that Captain Tisdall, his Adjutant, and Quartermaster Captain Freer were both retained on pay. Nevertheless, Hills appears to have fulfilled his military obligations, holding monthly parades at a time when the numbers of substitutions and desertions escalated. He was also a JP who occasionally sat on the bench of the Alexandra Resident Magistrate's Court.

He did not sign the 1865 petitions from Alexandra and Kihikihi protesting about the government treatment of the militiamen, but in September 1865, wrote a lengthy letter to the *Daily Southern Cross* newspaper, setting out a critique of what he saw as the government's mis-management of the frontier settlements and the plight of its settlers. In it, he made it clear that he too planned to leave.

Early in June 1866, the Hill family sold up and left Te Awamutu for Auckland, and in December his land grants became freehold, allowing him to sell both properties. At Auckland he leased Motuihe Island (referred to at the time as Graham's Island) where he farmed and Frances had another daughter (Eliza Jane). They remained there only until late 1867, about the time the Waikato Regiments were disbanded. In 1870, aged about 48 years, Frederick Hills left his family in Auckland and moved to Tahiti where he established a relationship with Nu'u Dutailis, the Tahitian daughter of a French naval captain, with whom he was to have three more sons.

Following the death in Auckland of her son, George Bredin, with whom Frances Hills and her other children appear to have been living, she and 6 children migrated to Tahiti, but in 1875 Frederick and Nu'u moved on to Hawaii, became American citizens and eventually married in 1899 after Frances Ann Hills passed away in Tahiti in 1895. Frederick Jesse Hills died in Hawaii in 1903 aged 81 years.

Thanks for considerable assistance with this story to Auckland genealogist Christine Laiava'a who visited the Centre with Sandra Mentjox to talk about Hills on Craft Day.



Frances Ann Hills